

February 16, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
145 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**House Bill 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26 - FAV**

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

My name is Georgianna Strege. I have lived in Maryland for over 50 years, and currently in Gambrills, MD for 7 years. I am a mother of four, I'm a grandmother, I've maintained a small family business for decades, and I've always aimed to show up for my community when I can. I have also voted in every election since I was old enough to vote. My family always stressed the importance of this. I am writing this testimony to express my support for House Bill 580 so that Montgomery County can choose to implement ranked choice voting in its elections, because I believe all Maryland voters and legislators should be able to choose the electoral system that is right for them.

Even though I am not a Montgomery County resident, my son lived in Montgomery County for 10 years and has expressed deep frustration with their elections. I remember when he told me about the 2018 Democratic Primary which as we know is the decisive election in Montgomery County. Marc Elrich won the Democratic nomination for County Executive by only 77 votes, less than 0.1% of votes in a crowd of 6 candidates. The certified election results show he and David Blair both received 29.0% votes, that's how close the results were. This margin does not produce a clear mandate to govern. With RCV, it is very possible David Blair would have won if voters 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice rankings were considered and would have produced a winner with actual majority support (>50% + 1).

In that election, the County At-Large Council race featured 33 candidates for 4 winning seats. Voters could select 4 choices but could not rank them in order of preference. My son used all of the 4 allowed votes, but he mentioned it is sometimes a tactical choice to vote for your top one or two candidates to avoid spoiling their chance of winning. With RCV, voters can rank candidates in order of preference, and the county could even decide how many rankings voters should get for a 4-winner race. This would not only allow voters to better express their preferences for candidates, but it would also better enable candidates with broadest support to win. In this race, the top 4 candidates received between 7.4% and 12.2%, well below the 20% threshold that would apply in a 4-winner proportional RCV race.

These crowded races won by extremely narrow margins are screaming for RCV. It makes sense that Montgomery County council members, delegates and voters have shown their support for this system year after year. They should be allowed to implement the electoral system that makes sense for them. The state should not stand in the way of a county trying to improve its democratic process. RCV makes the system fair for all.

Please give HB 580 full consideration and a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Georgianna Strege  
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